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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

# LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION

*reduces herd testing  
in . . .*

# ERADICATING BOVINE TB

## LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION

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## ERADICATING BOVINE TB



Bovine tuberculosis still strikes with a vengeance . . . not with the massive onslaught of five decades ago, but with sporadic bursts that reach into every State each year.

Bovine TB still wipes out family dairy businesses, and infects people, pigs, dogs, cats, and even zoo animals. It is harder to find now than when the national effort to eradicate it began about 50 years ago. Then, you could expect to find TB in 5 head of cattle out of 100. Now, you could test more than 3,400 head before finding 5 cases.

To help eliminate bovine TB, animal disease eradication workers have adopted a simple but effective tracing system that reduces on-the-farm TB testing of cattle. Under this system, cattle found to be TB infected during slaughter are traced back to the original herd. Thus, the reservoir of infection can be destroyed at its source. The identification and traceback system is already being used in the eradication of brucellosis. Now, the system can be used to locate both TB- and brucellosis-infected herds.

Diseased market cattle that have been properly marked or tagged on the farm or ranch can be quickly traced back to their herd of origin, saving precious hours that could

prevent infection of other animals or people. Through tracing, isolated pockets of TB infection can be located with less effort than with farm-by-farm tuberculin testing. The disease has been reduced to a low level through the use of the tuberculin test, which will continue to be used to locate infection, particularly in areas with a relatively high incidence of TB.

Tracing diseased cattle requires teamwork by packing plant personnel, cattle buyers, meat inspectors, veterinarians, animal disease eradication workers, and, most of all, livestock producers.

## HOW THE TRACING SYSTEM WORKS



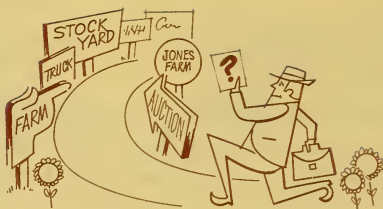
Discovery of tuberculosis lesions in cattle during slaughter triggers an intensive search to locate and destroy the source of the disease.

The infected carcass, hide, and animal parts are immediately removed from the slaughter line and isolated, and the meat inspector makes careful note of all clues to animal identification. These include tags, brands, and tattoos placed on the animal by the herd owner, sales yard, or packing plant. Tissue samples are taken for laboratory analysis.



Word of the disease discovery is sped to State and Federal veterinarians who conduct animal disease eradication programs, and the search begins for cattle that may have had prolonged contact with the diseased animal, and for the original herd.

Aided by tags or marks that provide positive animal identification, the tracing procedure can be rapid and effective. But stymied by lack of clues, the trail may lead through sales yards, trucking firms, auction barns, into other counties or States . . . and perhaps to dead ends.



Positive livestock identification provides a well-marked trail, and herd owners along the way whose animals have been exposed to the deadly TB organism can take remedial action. Authorities in the field of human health can be notified to reduce the threat to farm families. Eradication workers and herd owners can work closely together to confine and destroy the disease.

## IDENTIFICATION FROM FARM THROUGH SLAUGHTER

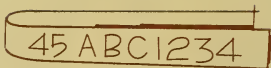


Tags, marks, and brands can effectively identify cattle from farm or ranch through slaughter. A basic requirement for any effective identification method, however, is that it must be backed up by permanent, accurate, and up-to-date records kept by a responsible organization in a central location. A second requirement is that the identification tag or mark must remain with the animal until inspection during slaughter is completed.



**Backtags** Animal disease eradication workers can provide plastic tags which are applied to the backs of cattle to give temporary identification during marketing and slaughter. Records of each tag are kept by State or USDA officials in the State where the tags are used. They are available to any cattleman in a county or other designated area where a Market Cattle Testing Program is in operation. Information on this program may be obtained from county agents, farm advisers, or State or Federal veterinarians. The tags are imprinted with a combination of numbers and letters that identify the State, county, and herd of origin of animals shipped to market.





**National Uniform Eartags** A program for identifying cattle is operated by USDA in cooperation with the States. Metal eartags are applied to cattle to aid in animal disease eradication. This may be done by State or Federal officials, or by designated veterinary practitioners. The tags are permanent, and tag numbers are registered and kept on file in State or Federal offices. A farmer or rancher may obtain further information about this program from his county agent, farm adviser, or veterinarian, or from the USDA or State departments of agriculture.



**Organization Eartags** Organizations such as the Dairy Herd Improvement Association and artificial breeding associations also apply metal identification eartags to cattle. Participation in one of these organizations gives the livestock producer assurance of an excellent identification system.



**Official Brands** In States that have official brand registry, brands provide a good means of permanently identifying animals sold and slaughtered within the State. Brands lose some of their usefulness in disease tracing when animals are shipped across State lines.



**Tattoos** Although tattoos are permanent marks of identification, they are most useful in identifying local animals. They are limited by lack of State-wide systems for registering the numbers and letters applied, and by difficulty in reading tattoos at the slaughtering plant.





**Sales Tags** These tags provide temporary identification of animal with owner. They are particularly useful in States where they are applied at sales yards.

## THE LIVESTOCK PRODUCER GAINS



Keeping cattle positively identified is good insurance for any farmer or rancher. It helps provide a check on the health of the herd each time animals are marketed through a federally inspected slaughtering plant.

Skilled meat inspectors quickly spot signs of tuberculosis and other diseases as they check each carcass. Serious disease problems are immediately called to the herd owner's attention, and, if warranted, expert help is available to protect the health of his family and herd.

Speeding up the tracing of infected animals back to the herd of origin cuts short the time during which bovine TB can infect people and other animals.

A good system for identifying cattle also is helpful in keeping accurate production and breeding records. It can be the basis for officially determining the status of tuberculosis infection in a herd or area. Herd owners can maintain their herd or area TB accreditation without the extra animal handling necessary with tuberculin testing, if animals are properly identified and marketed through approved slaughtering plants.

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